

# Constitution Day September 17<sup>th</sup> Suggested Lessons

Lesson Plan #:AELP-GOV0002

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## Citizenship and the Constitution

An AskERIC Lesson Plan

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**Submitted by:** Tana Carney Preciado

**School or Affiliation:** CVAVTS, El Reno, OK

**Endorsed by:** These lesson plans are the result of the work of the teachers who have attended the Columbia Education Center's Summer Workshop. CEC is a consortium of teacher from 14 western states dedicated to improving the quality of education in the rural, western, United States, and particularly the quality of math and science Education. CEC uses Big Sky Telegraph as the hub of their telecommunications network that allows the participating teachers to stay in contact with their trainers and peers that they have met at the Workshops.

**Date:** May 1994

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**Grade Level(s):** 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

**Subject(s)**

- Social Studies/US Government

**Overview:** Students need to be informed citizens on a local, state and national level.

**Purpose:** To identify government officials and resources on a local, state and national level. To demonstrate an understanding of the government on a local, state and national level.

**Objectives:**

1. To list government officials to a local, state and national level.
2. To identify government agencies on a local, state and national level.
3. To list the 2 houses of Congress.
4. To name the 3 branches of the United States government.
5. To name the 3 departments represented in the President's cabinet.
6. To determine what is a presidential veto.
7. To name the 2 major political parties in the United States.
8. To describe an amendment.
9. To identify federalism.
10. To determine who makes the laws of a state.

**Resources/Materials:**

local telephone directory

US Government/ Citizenship textbook.

### **Activities and Procedures:**

1. Read and discuss government textbook/citizenship textbook with students. Create an awareness of how the government works and the officials at the local, state and national level.
2. Discuss the government agency services provided at the local, county, state and national levels. Have a local telephone directory available as a resource material.

### **Activity 1:** Write the names of government officials

1. President
2. Vice-President
3. United States Senators from your state
4. Member of the United States House of Representatives from your congressional district
5. Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court
6. Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
7. United States Secretary of State
8. Governor of your state
9. Mayor city manager of your municipality
10. Name the 3 branches of the United States Government
11. Who elects the President
12. Name the 3 departments represented in the President's Cabinet
13. What is a presidential veto
14. Name the 2 house of Congress
15. List the qualifications for a United States Senator
16. Name the 3 United States Courts
17. Who heads the Supreme Court
18. Name the 2 major political parties in the United States
19. What is an amendment
20. What are the first ten amendments to the Constitution called
21. How old must a citizen be to vote
22. What is federalism
23. Who makes the laws of a state

**Activity 2:** Study the following chart of federal, state, county and local governmental agencies. Then write the agency that you would contact to help you solve the problems listed below.

#### **Federal:**

Internal Revenue Service  
Post Office  
Social Security Administration

#### **State:**

Division of Motor Vehicles  
Environmental Protection Agency

**County:**

Commissioner of Voter Registration  
Department of Human Services

**Local:**

Police Department  
Fire Department  
Tax Assessor  
Board of Education

**Questions:**

1. Your parents have added a room to your home and want to protest an increase in their property tax.
2. You have moved to a new town and need to enroll in school.
3. Your brother has reached driving age and wants to apply for a driver's license.
4. Your mother wants to know if she can deduct the cost of home insulation from her income tax.
5. You have obtained your first job and need a social security number.
6. You need advice about how to dispose of flammable materials.
7. Your new bicycle is stolen.
8. Heavy smoke and fumes from a chemical factory are polluting your neighborhood.
9. You have moved and need to have your mail forwarded to your new address.
10. Your sister has turned 18 and wants to register to vote.
11. Your friend has home and family problems and wants some help.

## The U.S. Constitution Power Grab Game

An AskERIC Lesson Plan

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**Submitted by:** Don M. Carlson

**School or Affiliation:** Columbia River High School, Vancouver, WA

**Endorsed by:** These lesson plans are the result of the work of the teachers who have attended the Columbia Education Center's Summer Workshop. CEC is a consortium of teacher from 14 western states dedicated to improving the quality of education in the rural, western, United States, and particularly the quality of math and science Education. CEC uses Big Sky Telegraph as the hub of their telecommunications network that allows the participating teachers to stay in contact with their trainers and peers that they have met at the Workshops.

**Date:** May 1994

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**Grade Level(s):** 10, 11, 12

**Subject(s):**

- Social Studies/US Government
- Social Studies/US Constitution

**Overview:** The highest law of the land in the United States is the Constitution. This is the basic principle we want young people to understand and support in our social studies classes. Associated with the knowledge of the Constitution are several fundamental ideas: checks and balances, separation of powers, Bill of Rights and amendments.

**Purpose:** To encourage students to comprehend these points of emphasis and relate them to the study of the three branches of our federal government. Several activities are described. The culminating activity is the "Power Grab Game" given before the final test on the Constitution Unit.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

1. Identify the three branches of American government.
2. Describe the function of each branch of government.
3. Explain how the "checks and balances" system functions to protect the individual citizen from illegal power hungry politicians.
4. Describe how each branch of government is "separate" in its powers to the other branches of government.
5. Explain how the amendments to the Constitution function today.

**Activities:** The following ideas will prepare students for their explanation of the Constitution:

The Power Game -- Checks and Balances in the Constitution:

1. Divide the class into three groups: Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of government. Students should have a copy of the Constitution with them.
2. In each round the teacher will give each branch of government an opportunity for an unconstitutional "Power Grab". The remaining two groups have two minutes to find proof from the Constitution (amendments included) by Article, section and clause, why the power grab is unconstitutional.
3. When a person thinks he finds the appropriate check he yells, "check". He must be prepared to respond with the answer immediately. If wrong, others may try to block the grab for power with the two minutes, alternating between branches until the two minutes are gone or the answer is correct.
4. When checked correctly, the branch received 10 points. If no one gets the correct answer, the branch grabbing power gets 5 points. No penalty for wrong answers.
5. A round is a question for each branch.

### ***Power Grabs:***

1. President - A serious economic crisis takes place in the U.S. The President decides to run for a third term. (Amendment 22)  
Congress - Congress passes a law taking 10% on lumber being exported. (Article I, Section 9, Paragraph 5)  
Courts - The Court rules that the government may not issue patents because of the need for technological advance. (Article I, Section 8, Paragraph 8)
2. President - The President declares war on China. (Article I, Section 8, Paragraph 11)  
Congress - Congress passes a law that people from Washington may not drive cars in Oregon because of pollution. (Article IV, Section 2, Paragraph 1)  
Courts - Since Washington D.C. is not in any state, residents there may not vote in national elections. (Amendment 23)
3. President - The President appoints Dan Evans to Senator Adams' seat when he resigns due to a personal scandal. (Article I, Section 3, Paragraph 2)  
Congress - Congress impeaches Bush because he pardons North. The Democratic Congress uses their anger to get him. (Article II, Section 4)  
Courts - The Court rules that because of our large national debt, the U.S. can no longer borrow money. (Article I, Section 8, Paragraph 2)
4. President - to fight terrorism, having his or her fingernails ripped off will punish anyone found guilty of hijacking. (Amendment 8)  
Congress - Congress decides that beards are illegal; anyone who wore one in the last year must a \$100 fine. (Article I, Section 9, Paragraph 3)  
Courts - The Court decides that religion and politics don't mix, therefore; no government official is required to take an oath of office. (Article II, Section 1, Paragraph 8 or Article VI, Section 3)
5. President - The President decides that Congress will meet in regular session on December 15 of each year. (Amendment 20, Section 2)  
Congress - Congress decides to impeach President Bush with the President Pro-Temp of the Senate presiding. (Article I, Section 3, Paragraph 6)

- Courts - The ambassador to Spain is brought home and tried in a New York court for crimes. (Article III, Section 2, Paragraph 1)
6. President - The President orders that a mass murderer be sent back to Washington from Oregon. (Article IV, Section 2, Paragraph 2)  
 Congress - A House member dies, the House takes four days off to mourn but the Senate says they can only have two days off. (Article I, Section 5, Paragraph 4)  
 Courts - The Court rules that the heads of departments may no longer make appointments of inferior officers, but only the President of the U.S. (Article II, Section 2, Paragraph 2)
7. President - Paul Newman comes to town and cuts off the heads of all parking meters. President Bush pardons him. (Article II, Section 2, Paragraph 1)  
 Congress - Congress passes a law naming 15 university students guilty of crimes against the government - orders them expelled from school. (Article I, Section 9, Paragraph 3)  
 Courts - A male teacher sues over sexual discrimination by taking the case directly to the Supreme Court. (Article III, Section 2, Paragraph 2)
8. President - Your land is in the way of a federal highway, so the President takes your land without compensation. (Amendment 5)  
 Congress - Congress passes a law that says you can sue your state in federal court. (Amendment 11)  
 Courts - The Court rules that income tax is illegal and you don't have to pay. (Amendment 16)
9. President - The President orders that since all citizens over 18 want to vote for the President, they may do so by popular vote. (Amendment 26)  
 Congress - Congress decides because of the contributions of Pete Rose in baseball, they will honor him with the title, "Sir Pete Rose". (Article I, Section 10, Paragraph 1)  
 Courts - The Court rules that because of the difficulty of finding honest, law abiding they will allow Senator Mark Hatfield be Secretary of Interior. (Article I, Section 6, Paragraph 2)
10. President - The President, concerned about drug violations in the state of Washington, allows the Governor and Attorney General to suspend democracy for a period of one month. (Article IV, Section 4)  
 Congress - Congress decides to change the Constitution to allow the President to be elected to one term of six years. (Article IV or Amendment 22)  
 Courts - The Courts find Poindexter guilty of treason on the basis of testimony of Ollie North, alone. (Article III, Section 3, Paragraph 1)

**Resources/Materials Needed:** A copy of the U.S. Constitution for each student.

**Tying It All Together:** The understanding and study of the Constitution can be interesting and exciting to students when a variety of methods and activities are used. Teachers must constantly be seeking new ways and materials to make their subject challenging and worthwhile. Continued study and thoughtful discussion can help teachers to make the Constitution relevant.

## The Bill of Right is For Us Today

An AskERIC Lesson Plan

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**Submitted by:** Jacque Peterson

**School or Affiliation:** Lehi Junior High School, Lehi, UT

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**Description:**

A bill of rights is needed in a free society in order to protect the rights of the individual from abuses by the government. Government rarely acts against the interests of the majority, and often the beneficiary of a specific decision is one of the minority. Yet, the entire society benefits from the protection of minority rights. Oftentimes protecting the minority causes great controversy, but each person benefits ultimately. We are all a part of some minority, whether it is race, religion, economics, political beliefs, or social beliefs. We all need our individual rights protected.

**Grade Level(s):** 7, 8, 9

**Subject(s):**

- Social Studies/Civics

**Goal:**

The purpose of this activity is to acquaint the students with the guaranteed rights of the Bill of Rights, and assist them to see the application of these rights in their daily lives.

**Objectives:** The students will be able to:

1. Identify and locate the Bill of Rights.
2. List the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.
3. Apply the rights to their daily lives.
4. Learn the advantages and disadvantages of committee work.
5. Use the newspaper to identify three rights currently being protected or questioned by the Bill of Rights.
6. Memorize the titles or summary statements for the Bill of Rights.

**Materials:**

Newspapers, butcher paper, copy of the First Ten Amendments.

**Procedure:**

1. All students will individually list the rights guaranteed by the First Ten Amendments to the Constitution. These will be checked and discussed to insure all students understand these rights.
2.
  - A. The students will be separated into groups of three or four people, preferably with students of dissimilar interests. Each group will take a piece of butcher paper and make three headings:  
  
(1) Rights in School, (2) Rights at Home, and (3) Rights in Public.
  - B. The students will then list ten rights for each column. These could include rights such as loud music, large groupings of friends, prayer at home, etc.
  - C. The students will then write to the side of each item in each list the number of the amendment that corresponds to the right listed.
  - D. The group will add one more right from an Amendment they had not used into one of the columns.
  - E. Each group will present its lists to the class.
  - F. Note--Add a rule that no group may ask the Instructor for clarification or information unless the whole group agrees on the question. Also, the whole group must agree before something can be written on the paper.
3. The students will locate and mount on lined notebook paper three newspaper articles demonstrating current use of the Bill of Rights.
4. The students will memorize the titles or summary statements of the Bill of Rights. These will be tested by written exam.

**Tying it All Together:**

1. Have each group orally present one newspaper article to the class. Follow up with a discussion.
2. Test the students' ability to identify the titles and content of the Bill of Rights.
3. Discuss the problems and advantages of committee work.
4. Have the students discuss which one right is most important. They should eventually realize that each right is as important as the next, given the set of circumstances.



## US Constitution and Amendments

An AskERIC Lesson Plan

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**Submitted by:** Hollie Boyle

**School or Affiliation:** Bandera Junior High, TX

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### Description:

Many students feel the U.S. Constitution has no relevance on their lives.

**Grade Level(s):** 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

**Subject(s):**

- Social Studies/US Government
- Social Studies/US Constitution

### Goal:

The students will begin to learn about our framework for government and examine the actual document and see its direct impact on their lives.

**Objectives:** The students will be able to:

1. Understand the purposes of government listed in the Preamble.
2. To become familiar with the different Articles and Amendments of the Constitution.
3. To understand the various powers of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches that are listed in the Constitution.

**Materials:** Copies of the Constitution, butcher paper, magazines

### Procedure:

The following activities work best if used after a very preliminary discussion of the Constitution. An appropriate time would be after students have studied why the Articles of Confederation failed and the development of the Constitution.

1. Using an overhead transparency or a copy of the Constitution, read the Preamble. Briefly discuss the purposes of government listed in the Preamble. Divide students into six groups. Assign each group a purpose of government listed in the Preamble. (To form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty.) On butcher-block paper, instruct each group to list specific provisions in the Constitution that grant the government power to fulfill these purposes. Ask each group to select a spokesperson to explain their list to the class. Discuss.
2. Divide the class into groups of three students each. Using magazines or newspapers have them find five pictures each that illustrate a part of the Constitution. For example a picture of President Bush could be used for Article 2 Section 1 Clause 1. This can be abbreviated A2 Si C1. Each student would paste their five pictures on a sheet of paper and write the A S C numbers below the pictures with a brief explanation, which in this case would be Chief Executive. Each picture must depict a different part of the Constitution. No two pictures should represent the same thing.
3. Play CLAIM YOUR POWERS.  
Divide the class into three groups representing the three branches of government; executive, legislative, and judicial. If the class is large, two groups may represent each branch. Provide each group with two signs: "Claim" and "Do Not Claim." Each branch will also need the list of its powers stated in the Constitution.

Tell the class that in this activity they will be acting as a branch of government and that it is their responsibility to maintain the powers granted to them in Articles I, II, or III of the Constitution. Tell the class that you will read a series of situations, each involving a power of one or more branches of the government. In some instances, a branch will have the sole power; in others, the power may be shared. After each situation is read, each group will have one minute to discuss the situation and decide if the power described belongs to its branch and to find the part of the Constitution justifying that decision. At the end of one minute, the leader will say the word "vote" and each group must hold up a card, either "Claim" or "Do Not Claim." Every group must vote on each situation. Each group will then explain its reasons for its decision, and the teacher and students representing the other two branches will rule on the accuracy of the choice.

Scoring is as follows:

- a. Two points will be given for correctly claiming and justifying the claim of power.
- b. One point will be given for correctly voting to not claim a power.
- c. A zero will be given to a group incorrectly claiming or not claiming a power.

You, the teacher, may make up your own situations or use the following:

- d. A bill is to be considered requiring automobile manufacturers to install seat belts in all new cars. (ex and leg)
- e. A case is being appealed from the Texas Supreme Court. (jud)
- f. The President has prepared his budget message for Congress. (ex)
- g. An amendment to balance the budget has been proposed. (leg)
- h. The President requires appropriations to fund his "Star Wars" defense plan. (leg)
- i. A treaty involving nuclear arms limitations is being negotiated between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. (leg and ex)
- j. A judge has been convicted of bribery. (jud)
- k. An ambassador's son is arrested for driving while intoxicated in Washington, D.C. (jud)
- l. In his campaign platform, the President promised to abolish the 55 mph speed limit. (ex)
- m. The Justice Department requests that the 1973 abortion decision (Roe v. Wade) be overturned so that states may set their own abortion policies.

## You and the U.S. Constitution

An AskERIC Lesson Plan

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**Submitted by:** Kim-Scott Miller

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### Description:

- \* A constitution contains basic laws that govern people.
- \* The U.S. Constitution contains rules that govern our country.
- \* The U.S. Constitution protects the rights and freedoms of America's citizens.
- \* The U.S. Constitution is over 200 years old.
- \* Social Studies is the study of past and current events of a society - the ongoing history of people, places and things.

**Grade Level(s):** 4

**Subject(s):**

- Social Studies/US Government
- Social Studies/US Constitution

### Goal:

To understand why people who work and play together need to follow rules; and how these rules are developed.

### Objectives:

- \*To develop awareness of the necessity for rules.
- \*To use logic to decide whether things are right or wrong.
- \*To give practice in classifying.

## Materials:

- \* Copy of the U.S. Constitution.
- \* Instant Camera (Polaroid) w/film.
- \* Poster (We The People).
- \* Colored construction paper.
- \* Colored chart paper.

## Procedure:

### **Activity 1.**

#### *Introduce the Topic*

Ask: What do you celebrate on your birthday? (the anniversary of your birth) What other kinds of anniversaries call for celebrations? (weddings, special occasions) What does our country celebrate on the Fourth of July? (its birthday-the anniversary of the founding of the United States of America) Explain that our country is over 200 years old and that once it became a country, it needed rules to follow.

Display a copy of the U.S. Constitution. Explain that this document tells the laws of our country. It lists our country's rules and the rights of its citizens. Without much detail, point out certain parts of the Constitution that spell out the three branches of government - Executive (The branch of government concerned with putting a country's laws into effect.), Legislative (Having the power to create laws.), Judicial (Of or pertaining to courts, judges, or the administration of justice.) - and how they balance each other to keep power in check, the rights of citizens and how changes, amendments, can be made.

### **Activity 2.**

#### *Open Discussion*

Have students give opinions about how people who lived in the U.S. 200 years ago might have dressed, the kinds of homes they lived in and the kinds of schools students might have attended.

Take full-length photographs of each other (if possible, used instant photographs). Ask: How do the people in these photos differ from people who lived in 1787? Establish that people who lived 200 years ago might have looked much like the people of today. Differences in manner of dress and hairstyles should be noted. Look at things around the classroom and identify the TV, telephone, automobile, computer, book, etc. and discuss which objects would be familiar to people whom lived 200 years ago? Which would be unfamiliar? Why? Do you think anyone took photographs of the men who wrote the Constitution? Why not? (cameras had not been invented) If photographs had been taken, what do you think they would have shown? If people met today to make changes in the Constitution, could there be photos of the meetings? What might be in the photos to let you know they were taken in the 1990's and not in the 1700s? Display side one of the poster (We The People) in a prominent place. Discuss the illustrations and what each means to the students. Invite students to tell of any bicentennial celebrations they have heard about. Ask them to read the first three words (We the People . . .) of the Constitution. What do the words mean to you? If you could take one photograph to show the meaning of the words, what would be in the

photograph? Discuss various ideas and have students bring photographs of themselves. Duplicate the poster design to create a bulletin board display. Use colored construction paper to make the tree's trunk, branches and leaves. Have each student write his or her name on one leaf. As the unit progresses, have students write about the rights depicted on the poster and add these writings to the bulletin board as they are done.

### **Activity 3.**

#### *Following Rules*

Have students take a walking tour of the school in action (classroom, hallways, lunchroom, playground, etc.) Discuss what is observed. Ask: Are there rules involved in these places? What are the rules? How did they come about? Are they good or bad rules? What or who do they protect? Why do you think we have rules? Continue by asking: If you play a game for the first time, how do you know in what way the game should be played? (Learn the rules.) Why is it wrong to run in the school hallways? (against school rules) Through discussion, help students understand that rules give order, ensure fair play and protect people's rights and welfare.

Have students suppose you made a rule stating that only children with blue eyes are allowed to have play periods. Why would such a rule be unfair? Stress the point that rules are best when they protect the rights of all people. Write the words Safety, Health, Game on the chalkboard. Invite students to think of rules for each category and write them under the proper heading. Explain that a government makes rules called "laws." Our Constitution is a set of rules or laws all people in our country must follow.

#### **Follow-Up:**

Help the students make a "visual reference" bulletin board of specific classroom procedures. Title the bulletin board: The Right Things To Do. Subheads can read: Working Quietly, Cleaning Up, Waiting To Speak, Playing Fairly, Asking Permission, Raising Your Hand, Sharing, Using Equipment, Taking Turns. Have the students draw pictures to illustrate each of the subheads. Display the drawings on the bulletin board to create a visual reference. Write a "Classroom Constitution" by having students suggest rules that will help make things run smoothly in the classroom. As each rule is proposed, have the class vote on whether or not it should be included in the document. If two-thirds or more votes yes, the rule becomes part of the constitution. If not, the rule cannot be passed. Students might, at your direction, discuss the following:

1. Should students be allowed to bring any kind of toy to use at recess? What kinds should be allowed? What kinds should not be allowed?
2. Should there be a "court system" to judge students who break rules? How many judges should there be? Should all class members take turns being judges? What would be a reasonable punishment for breaking rules?